

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 6, and 15-18 are currently pending and under examination. Claims 2-5 and 7-14 have been withdrawn. By this Amendment, Claims 1 and 6 have been amended to be in better form. No new matter has been introduced.

In the Office Action dated December 28, 2007, Claims 1, 6, and 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 7,176,972 to Mutoh et al. ("Mutoh"). The Office Action alleged that Mutoh teaches a plurality of vertical charge transfer devices, such as read-out CCD 37, a plurality of charge-discharging circuit sets, such element 44 that includes at least four charge-discharging circuit, e.g., element 34, and an output circuit, such as element 41. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Claim 1, as amended, recites an electric charge transfer apparatus, comprising a plurality of vertical charge transfer devices, each of which is formed adjacent to a photoelectric conversion element and transfers a signal electric charge converted by the photoelectric conversion element, a plurality of charge-discharging circuit sets formed next to each vertical transfer device, each charge-discharging circuit set including at least two charge-discharging circuits connected in a serial manner for discharging the signal electric charge transferred by at least one of adjacent vertical transfer devices, and an output circuit that outputs the signal electric charge transferred by the vertical charge transfer devices to an outside of the electric charge transfer apparatus.

Similar features of amended Claim 1 are also included in amended Claim 6.

Applicants respectfully submit that Mutoh fails to teach or suggest at least the combinations of the features recited by amended Claims 1 and 6, as described above. First, as shown in Fig. 2 of Mutoh and col. 8, line 23 to col. 9, line 32, a plurality of recording CCD 36 in each column of photodiodes 33 are connected to only one read-out CCD 37. That is, each CCD 37, i.e., the vertical charge transfer device, is not formed adjacent to each photodiodes 33. Second, there is no disclosure in Mutoh that the charge-discharging circuit set 44 includes at least two charge-discharging circuits connected in a serial manner for discharging the signal electric charge transferred by at least one of adjacent vertical transfer devices. The elements 34, which are characterized by the Office Action as charge-discharging circuits, are actually pixels, not charge-discharging circuits.

Accordingly, Mutoh fails to teach or suggest each and every element of Claims 1 and 6. In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claims 1 and 6 are allowable over Mutoh.

Claims 15-18, which depend from allowable independent Claim 1, are likewise allowable at least due to their dependency from patentable amended independent Claim 1 as well as for the additional subject matter recited therein.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the application, withdrawal of the outstanding rejections, allowance of Claims 1, 6, and 15-18, and the prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowance are respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is necessary in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

In the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to prevent abandonment of this application, then such extensions of time are hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a), and any fees required therefore are hereby authorized to be charged to our Deposit Account No. 01-2300 referencing docket number **107317-00063**.

Respectfully submitted,


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